

# **UNFRAMING THE 'KING OF POP': A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF MICHAEL JACKSON**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to demonstrate the hermetic power of media in relation to language and ideology by examining the contradictory media representations of Michael Jackson as the celebrated 'King of Pop' and the queer 'Wacko Jacko.' To this end, a critical discourse analysis was done on twelve online news reports retrieved from four major international news portals, namely MSNBC.com, CNN.com, BBC News Online and Reuters. These news reports were published in conjunction with the sudden death of this highly controversial celebrity on 25 June, 2009. Using the three-dimensional framework of CDA introduced by Fairclough (2001) and the linguistic analytical apparatus borrowed from Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Theory of Language and Fowler's (1991) Critical Linguistics, findings from the analysis of the lexical and grammatical structures revealed a strong stereotypical tendency in the representation of Michael Jackson, demonstrating a gendered and homophobic practice in media discourse as conjectured in queer theories. This strongly suggests the credibility of CDA as an analytical instrument in the study of media language, power and ideology. Key ideas synthesised from diverse areas of media, celebrities and queer studies used to facilitate the analysis in this study further confirms the value of CDA in interdisciplinary studies. It is therefore recommended that more cross-disciplinary research to be conducted by Malaysian critical discourse analysts, exploring new and diverse research areas, such as studies on celebrity, to

promote the scholarly worth of CDA. At the same time, it can also be introduced as a pedagogical alternative in schools and universities to bring about greater critical language awareness among our students in addressing issues pertaining to language, ideology and power.